

SOUTH CAROLINA vs.
IGNORANCE.

Much turbulence of spirit has been manifested within the past few weeks, over the proposed change of the organic law in the state of South Carolina. A large amount of the explosion of words and bitter invectives have been the sequence of an inflamed judgment, of political prejudice, or of a profound ignorance of the question.

As the BROAD AX is the accepted organ of a number of colored people in Utah, and as it is read by many of the race who honestly differ with our political views, we therefore believe that it is our duty, as well as our privilege, to place this matter right before our readers.

As we have stated, the dense ignorance of a subject oftentimes leads the human mind into the greatest errors; and upon this question it would seem that our people had jumped to the conclusion given out by the wily politician, that the state of South Carolina is seeking to disfranchise the colored voters of that State. This, however, is not true, and the idea is either the result of ignorance or dishonesty, as we propose to show.

Humanity is advancing; life, as a whole, is ascending; and the people of the United States are progressing. Free government has been brought about by a system of evolution, from the experiences and observations of the past. Universal suffrage and a pure Democratic form of government, is as yet a bare experiment.

Our forefathers who founded this Republic, proceeded upon the theory that all were not only free and equal by nature, but they were honest and intelligent. The voters of an ideal republic should possess all these qualifications. But while we have the best government on earth, it by no means follows that we have a perfect form of government. Humanity is fallible, and the imperfections of our system and laws become more apparent as we advance in the scale of life. The truth is, our voters do not possess to any universal degree; either of the three great characteristics necessary to good citizenship, viz., freedom, honesty, and intelligence. The world was not made in a day; neither can a perfect form of government be created in a generation. It requires the time, perseverance, and process of ages. Each of the essential qualities of which we have spoken, are perhaps possessed by a greater number of the people in our country, than by any other nation. Yet it is important that we should continue to lead in the "struggle for existence," and that we strive at last to reach a proper form of government, with equality of men before the law, and that each individual voter will be intelligent enough to know his rights, and that which is best for himself and his fellows, and be honest enough to accord to all the the same right which he enjoys himself.

One of the greatest dangers to a free and popular government, is ignorance and superstition. It is

also an evil which can be more easily eradicated than the other two to which we have referred.

To educate the people of our country is the first and highest duty of the state. We must imbue all classes with a burning zeal to become intelligent, and keep in step with the progress of the age; otherwise our liberty will be lost and our boasted civilization wither away.

It has been the policy of many of the states, and of the general government to promote the growth of intelligence and education, by liberal donations of land and money to be used to that end. As a people we have for years been making education a special feature. Taxation for free schools, and the reservation of a large part of the public domain, prove the importance of this question with the American people.

The civil service examination is another means to stimulating the culture of the mind; for by it benefits are withheld to those not educated.

But what does South Carolina propose to do? Why is all this fuss made about this Southern State? After all she is simply striving to attain a more intelligent citizenship by requiring her voters to be able to read. That should not disfranchise any true, patriotic American.

It is said it will disfranchise thousands of negroes, and also whites. Well, we say, after these long years of opportunities, if any white or colored man cannot read, he ought to be deprived of voting until he learns. All of the states now debar a man of suffrage for committing a crime, and we believe wilful ignorance is a crime. Every colored man in South Carolina can be taught to read, and if he will not, then we say he ought not to be permitted to vote. An ignorant vote is a dangerous vote, especially if wilfully so. The proposition of this southern State is a noble one, and every colored man should favor it. It is an inducement to elevate our race; it puts a premium on intelligence; it gives reward to merit, and withholds favors from the unworthy.

Let us not, as colored folks, say such a law is detrimental to our race; that would be an admission of weakness, by saying in effect, we cannot learn equal to the whites. Rather let us hail the law as an auspicious dawning of a brighter day, not only of the negro but of the whites.

The enactment of such a law would have a beneficial effect upon the colored race. It will awaken an ambition in the breast of many who are now weak and ignorant to become more enlightened, that they might exercise this high duty. The South is doing this for the good of our race, and instead of abusing them, we should give them the gratitude of our hearts.

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